United Generations

Mapping IntergenerationalLearning focused on Basic Skills - Latvia

Developed By:

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1. Introduction

Ageing is a global phenomenon. The world population ageing is causing changes in the society as whole. Senior citizens represent an important and ever-growing part of our European population, economy, and society. This poses manifold questions as to how member states can best ensure social inclusion, active citizenship and participation in life, economy and the society, access to services, goods, and opportunities in order to enable healthy well-ell-being and independent living thus minimizing the cost on their families, the society and the economy in general.

The United Generation project aims to open up digitally oriented learning pathways based on intergenerational and lifelong learning opportunities for supporting disadvantaged adults to upgrade their digital and literacy skills, with the involvement of young people thus supporting in a systematic way active aging and social inclusion.

This report is part of the United Generation project, which aims to provide an overview of the current scene in Latvia regarding intergenerational learning, along with the identification of the needs of adult and young learners.

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2. Intergenerational Learning in Latvia

Population in Latvia has been steadily decreasing ever since 1991 when there were 2.66 million people living in the state as opposed to 1.89 million in 2021 (Centrālā Statistikas Pārvalde, 2022). This significant decline has been a result of negative natural growth and negative net migration over the years. For instance, there were 17 420 live births and 34 600 deaths registered in Latvia in 2021, making the death rate almost precisely 100% higher than the birth rate. Combined with the net migration of (-286), Latvia lost 17 466 people of its population in 2021 (Oficiālās Statistikas Portāls, 2022).

While globally around 10% of the population is above the age of 65, in Europe society has been aging more rapidly, with 19% of people being over 65 (Statista, 2021). As far as Latvia goes, in 2021 around 19.5% of people were above 65 and effectively past the expected working age, as the official age of retirement in Latvia is 64 years and 3 months. This share of the population has experienced a growth of 1.9% since 2012 (17.6%), especially in Latgale and Vidzeme regions, as well as the big cities (Azamatova, 2020). Influentially the proportion of people below the age of 30 has decreased in the same timespan – 34.3% were below 30 in 2021, contrary to 30.8% in 2021 (Oficiālās Statistikas Portāls, 2022).

As far as the Active Ageing Index (AAI) goes, in 2018 Latvia scored 35.3 points out of 100, making the country on the level of the European Union average (35.7), however, Latvia did score the lowest (57.7) in the domain of “Independent, Healthy and Secure Living” among all the member states. This score is used to measure the untapped potential of senior citizens for active and healthy aging across the nation. It measures the level to which older people live independent lives, participates in paid employment and social activities, and their capacity to age actively (UNECE, 2019).

It is expected that the Latvian population will continue to age and will never be as young as it was before, and the aging of the society will only accelerate in the coming decades, thus is it of utmost importance to at least mitigate the negative consequences associated with the increase in the proportion of older people, most notably and rather commonly – lifelong

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learning (Azamatova, 2020).

One such opportunity to improve the situation came when Delfin Group, a Latvian financial services company, and the Association of Senior Communities in Latvia signed a collaboration agreement, pledging to continue supporting different aged care initiatives in Latvia in 2021. The collaboration aims to promote a more inclusive society in Latvia, notably by assisting the elderly in acquiring the current technology-use skills that are now absolutely necessary. The partnership agreement encompasses the planning of seminars on a number of digital topics, including general IT skills, online payment security, using online tools like ZOOM and MS Teams, and more. Additionally, courses on how to use social services, recalculate taxes, choose a personal tax recovery option, understand pension regulations, and create reports using the State Revenue Service Electronic Declaration Systems will be offered (DelfinGroup, 2021).

On the state level, the government of Latvia, for specifically, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (VARAM) has established the “Digital Transformation Guidelines 2021 - 2027”. In order to safeguard the digital environment, the document lays out long-term goals and strategic directives for the nation's digital development and adjustments that must be made in all spheres of the economy and of daily use and advancement in Latvian society and government. The standards outline the development of digital skills for the entire society, including fundamental abilities, everyday communication skills, and the abilities required for the use of digital technology in production, services, research, and commercialization. An emphasis is also placed on older people and people with disabilities to be able to operate government-provided services online, access their health care providers and health history, and just generally become more efficient members of society (VARAM, 2020).

“Latvian National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021 – 2027” has also addressed the issue of aging - it is critical to hasten the shift in the way society as a whole and the public sector perceive the aging process and a person's age. The active aging strategy will encourage the participation of senior citizens in economic and social activities. Seniors taking part in the

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labor market are encouraging a balance between employment and responsibilities at home, family responsibilities, community involvement, volunteer work, hobbies, ensuring healthy diet and healthcare practices, and physical activity. The nation must examine all regulations that impact seniors directly or indirectly in the context of active aging. It should outline the goals, duties, tools, and public funding for each of these regulations in light of the nature and anticipated effects of active aging and current relevant policies (Government of Latvia, 2020). Globally, the OECD has addressed issues related to education of citizens of all ages through their "OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia: Developing Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021 - 2027". When the strategies specified in these Education Development Guidelines (EDG) are put into practice with the assistance of all pertinent parties, Latvia should be able to close the skills gap and provide people of all ages with the knowledge and abilities they need to take advantage of future prospects. Some potential indicators were established during the OECD held workshops that would help enhance the EDG performance in Latvia. Specific set of indicators were also gathered in regard to adult learning that can be viewed here on page 111 (OECD, 2020).

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3. Good Practices

Here is a list of some good practices at a national level related to intergenerational and lifelong learning in Latvia:

GOOD PRACTICE 1	
Name	**Riga City Active Senior Alliance (RASA)**
Description (50-70 words)	Offering non-formal learning opportunities to elderly, particularly in Riga city (capital)
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	Riga City Municipality, Riga City Active Senior Alliance (RASA)
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	Organizational
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Digital Skills, Recreational Activities, Active Ageing, Intergenerational learning
Tools/Resources/ Services	-
Link/ Website	https://biedribarasa.lv/en/

GOOD PRACTICE 2	
Name	**Erasmus Plus project DIAL (2017-2019)**
Description (50-70 words)	Project DIGITAL ACQUISITION THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING No 2017-1-LV01-KA204-035455 main aim was to develop an innovative up-skilling pathway programme based on intergenerational and Life Long Learning opportunities where grandparents (mainly adults over 55+) acquire essential digital competences with the involvement of

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	their grandchildren, thus, supporting in a systemic way active aging, e-access, social inclusion, e-participation and personal development.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	NGO Project Net
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	Local, Regional, National
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Digital Skills, Active Ageing, Intergenerational learning
Tools/Resources/ Services	MOODLE learning platform http://moodle.dialproject.eu/
Link/ Website	**https://dialproject.eu/**

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GOOD PRACTICE 3	
Name	Project **ICT Skills 4 All**
Description (50-70 words)	The project "ICT Skills 4 All" - participation of older citizens in the digital age. The aim of the project as to understand the current practice of digital training of seniors and to improve it by introducing a training methodology in which seniors themselves educate each other, and young people are also involved, applying a new methodology - intergenerational training.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	Riga City Active Senior Alliance (RASA)
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Active Ageing, Digital Skills
Tools/Resources/ Services	https://www.tet.lv/piesledzies-latvija/materiali/start/
Link/ Website	https://www.up.pt/ictskills4all/

GOOD PRACTICE 4	
Name	**Senior University of Latvia**
Description (50-70 words)	An initiative organized by NGO Project Net since 2019, offering weekly classes to seniors – digital skills, English, personal development, healthy lifestyle and nutrition. Senior University is a member of the global network

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	RUTIS originated in 2005 in Portugal. Since 2019 Senior University operates in 4 cities – Riga, Sigulda, Malpils, Jelgava, Liepaja.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	NGO Project Net
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Digital Skills, Active Ageing
Tools/Resources/ Services	
Link/ Website	http://www.senioruuniversitate.lv/

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4. The Profile of Disadvantaged Adults (Age 60+)

To identify the profile and the needs of disadvantaged adults, 42 responses were collected from a questionnaire asking respondents to self-assess their digital skills and English language skills and their experiences with life-long learning.

Regarding the background of the respondents, 57,1% were between 60-70 years old, 40,5% were 70-80 and the remaining 2,4% 80+. In terms of the academic background, 2,4 % attended primary education, 28,6% completed university studies, 33,1% secondary education.

To start with the digital skills, the 50% of the respondents rated their ability to operate a computer as average (3), 26,2% as good. Their ability to use a smart phone 47,5% rated as good and 7,1 % as very good. Additionally, the ability to use a tablet has been rated low (0-2 out of 5) from the 54,7% of the respondents.

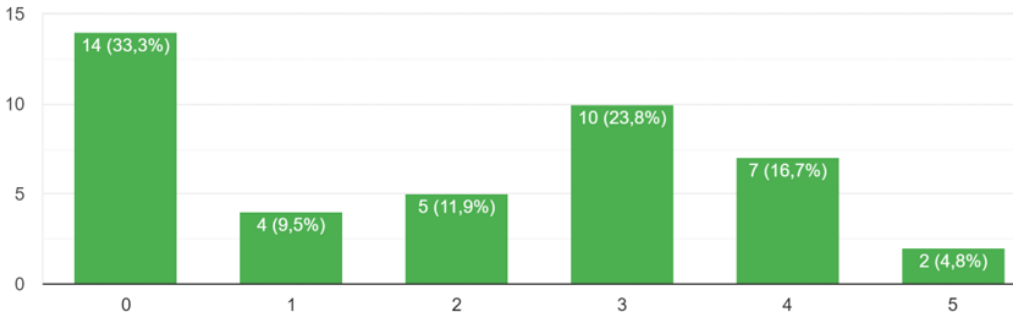

Figure 1: Seniors Ability to Operate Laptop

In regard to their ability setting up and use equipment such as microphones and cameras, 11,9% rated this ability as poor (0), whereas 26,2% rated it as good and very good. Additionally, in terms of the respondents' ability to search for information (articles, news etc.) on the internet, only 7,2 % of the respondents rated this as low (0-2), whereas 73,8 % rated this high (4-5 in scale 0-5).

Regarding social media and communication services, more 1/3 of the respondents (35,8 %) rated their ability to use social media towards the high-end, 42,8 % indicated low (0-2) and the remaining 21,4% in the middle (3). The most common social media channels used are Facebook (69%), Instagram 11,9%, TikTok (4,8%) and Twitter (4,8%). Moreover, the majority of the respondents (57,2%) rated as good and

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very good (4-5) their ability to use different means of communication such as chats and emails, whilst only 19,1 rated this low (0-3). The most common services identified are: Instant Messaging (100%), Social media (54,8%), Emails (92,6 %), and Video Conferencing (90,5%).

In terms of other services, 81% rated very good their ability to make online payments and 54,7 to book an appointment online. Additionally, 33,3% are not confident in their ability to protect their personal data online and to recognize potential threads (38,1%).

The second part of the questionnaire was focusing on the English Language Skills, asking the respondents to assess their ability to use the English language. The majority of the respondents rated their reading (45,2%) as good enough (3) and 19,1 % as very good and good (4-5); writing 52,4% as poor (0-2) and listening (64,2%) ability as poor (0-2), in relation to understanding abbreviations 76,1% of the respondents rated this poorly (0-2). The vast majority of the respondents (97,6%) selected Latvian as the language operating their electronic devices, whereas 38,1% chose also English and 16,7 % Russian.

Finally, in terms of attending seminars, 100% agreed to attend to a seminar targeting digital skills development, 88,1 % agreed to attend seminar targeting English language skills. The 38,1% respondents said that they would be interested to participate in intergenerational learning activities, 52,4 % were not sure, they would also be interested to share their own experiences in topics such as: story telling (67%), culture (46,9%), cooking (56,3 %), language (28,1 %), history (18,1%).

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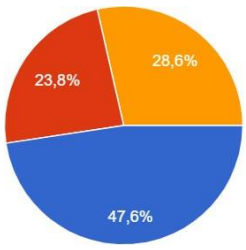
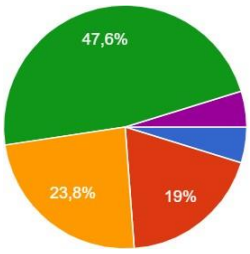
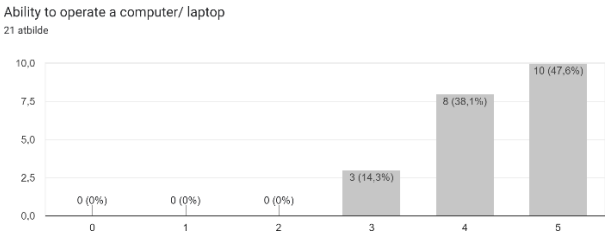
5. The Profile of Young Generation (15-30)

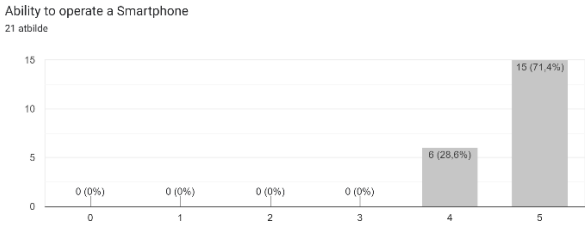
To identify the profile of youth, 21 responses were collected from a questionnaire asking respondents to self-assess their digital skills and English language skills and their experiences with life-long learning. The majority of the respondents (47,6%) fell into the age group of 16-20, followed by 26-30 years old (28,6%) and 21-25 years old (23,8%). Moreover, 47,6% completed a university degree, whilst 23,8% received higher secondary education and 19% - secondary education.





As it was expected, the majority of youth appears confident (4-5) using the computer/ laptop (85,7%), tablet (76,2%) and smartphone (100%).





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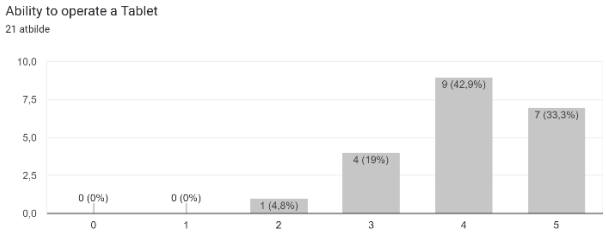

Additionally, 57,2% stated that they are confident (4-5) setting up and use equipment such as microphones and cameras, and 85,9% respondents rated highly (4-5) their ability to search the internet for information.

Similarly, respondents rated highly (4-5) their ability to use social media (81%), and different means of communication (90%). The most common social media apps mentioned are Facebook (66,7%), Instagram (90,5%), TikTok (57,1%), Twitter (14,3%), Snap Chat (57,1%) and LinkedIn (9,5%). In regard to various means of communication, social media chats are the most popular option (95,2%) along with instant messaging apps (90,5%), followed by email (85,7%) and video conferencing tools (61,9%).

Moreover, youth appear confident (4-5) in their ability to manage appointments online (85,7%), protect their privacy and personal information (61,9%), but to recognize potential online threats only 47,6 % are confident, 47,6 % admitted that they feel somehow able to recognize online treats.

In terms of English language skills, 81% participants rated highly (4-5) their ability to read and understand English, and 71,4 % of them rated highly (4-5) their ability to write texts. Regarding understanding of abbreviations, 81% of the respondents rated highly (4-5) this ability. Lastly, 95,2% respondents stated that they use English as the main language in which they operate their electronic devices.

Relating intergenerational learning and activities, 28,6% of the respondents stated that they had some experience in the past, 61,9% had no experience and 9,5% answered maybe. This was usually in the form of teaching digital skills to adults (19%) and offering social activities (71%). Gardening (9,5%) and teaching a foreign language (19,3%) were also some activities mentioned.

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6. Lifelong Learning Providers

In addition to the data collected from youth and adults, a focus group was organized with providers of adult education to share their views and needs about intergenerational learning in Latvia, along with suggestions and good practices that they might use in organizing and delivering those sessions.

For the focus groups, representatives from 3 organizations took part – all 3 organizations are working in adult education and aim to provide lifelong learning opportunities through the development of key skills such as digital skills and literacy.

The first point discussed was about reaching the target group, particularly elderly persons as they do not possess digital ability to use social networks and emails. The most common ways mentioned were:

- Through networking with NGO members, local municipalities
- Advertising in printed local media and printed banners located at cultural centres and post office.
- From mouth to mouth – existing learners inform their friends and family

Regarding good practices/ methods they use to engage adult learners are:

- Practical workshops conducted in nonformal way.
- Presenting case studies - adult learners like practical examples

In terms of challenges, some challenges faced by adult educators are:

- Reaching out those adults not using digital communication means
- Persuading adults to learn online.
- Senior students having difficulties accessing online learning.
- Adult learners aged 55+ do not possess digital competences, this is reason why they reject participation in learning.

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Finally, about intergenerational learning all the participants agreed that intergenerational learning is a new format in Latvia, the intergenerational collaboration is not well-recognized and should be promoted.

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7. Conclusion/ Summary

To sum up, The United Generation project aims to open up digitally oriented learning pathways based on intergenerational and lifelong learning opportunities for supporting disadvantaged adults to upgrade their digital and literacy skills, with the involvement of the young people thus supporting in a systematic way active ageing and social inclusion.

This report is part of the United Generation project and aims to provide an overview of the current scene in Latvia about intergenerational learning, along with the identification of the needs of adult and young learners. To accomplish this task, desk research was conducted and along with the data collected from youth, senior learners and adult educators will be used to design the United Generations Framework and learning material to be used as part of the intergenerational activities to be organized.

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